M.R. JAMES ON 'THE ABBEY CHURCH AT BURY': THE TEXT OF A LECTURE GIVEN AT THE ATHENAEUM, BURY ST EDMUNDS, 21 APRIL 1932

by RICHARD HOGGETT

INTRODUCTION

ALTHOUGH BEST KNOWN as the author of some of the finest ghost stories ever written in the English language, Montague Rhodes James (1862–1936) was first and foremost a formidable scholar, whose many and varied publications addressed subjects as diverse as biblical apocrypha, depictions of the Apocalypse, medieval wall paintings and cathedral roof bosses, and included numerous descriptive catalogues of medieval manuscripts.[1] One of the many subjects in which James was interested was the history of the former Benedictine Abbey of St Edmund in Bury St Edmunds. Having grown up nearby, he was fascinated by the ruins from an early age and in 1895 produced one of the most significant books about the abbey published to date.[2] James was subsequently instrumental in guiding archaeological investigations of the abbey, and maintained a lifelong interest in the site.

This article reproduces and contextualises the previously unpublished text of a lecture on 'The Abbey Church at Bury' given by James at the Bury St Edmunds Athenaeum on 21 April 1932.[3] In it he presented an erudite overview of a lifetime's research into the structure and appearance of the abbey church, drawing upon numerous documentary sources to conjure up an imaginary tour of the building in its mid-fifteenth-century heyday. It is particularly apt that this transcription should appear in the 2020 volume of the *Proceedings*, as this year marks the millennial anniversary of the formal foundation of the abbey by King Cnut, an event which is being celebrated widely within the region.

SUFFOLK CONNECTIONS

M.R. James was born in Kent, the youngest of four children, but when he was only three his family moved to Great Livermere, near Bury St Edmunds, where his father, Herbert James, served as rector from 1865 until his death in 1909.[4] Late in his life, James wrote fondly of his time at Great Livermere in his book *Suffolk and Norfolk*, asking forgiveness of his reader for 'a little expansiveness' and stating that 'from 1865 to 1909 the rectory was my home, if not my dwelling-place'.[5] He even used the now-demolished neighbouring Livermere Hall as the fictionalised setting for one of his early ghost stories, *The Ash Tree*, which was published in 1904 and is set against the background of the seventeenth-century Bury St Edmunds witch trials.[6]

James was home-schooled until he was eleven, and from an early age he was fascinated by local churches and their architecture, including the ruinous Abbey of St Edmund, and filled notebooks with records and sketches of his visits to various sites across the region.[7] James was subsequently educated at Temple Grove (1873–6) and Eton College (1876–82), where he developed early fascinations with biblical apocrypha, medieval manuscripts and what he termed 'Christian archaeology', passions which he developed further during his time as a

student at King's College Cambridge (1882–6).[8] On completion of his BA, in 1886 James was elected to a fellowship at King's College, eventually becoming the Provost of the college in 1905. In parallel to his college duties, in 1886 James also became the Assistant Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, rising to the position of Director in 1893, a post which he held until 1908. Following a brief period as Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University between 1913–15, late in the First World War James was offered the Provostship of Eton College, which he took up in 1918 and held until his death in June 1936.[9] James was buried in the cemetery at Eton, but a memorial plaque to him was unveiled in the chancel of Great Livermere church in 1998.[10] It describes James as a 'Noted Theologian and Antiquary' and 'Author of many Ghost Stories' and explains simply that 'He spent his boyhood in the Rectory here'.

THE ABBEY OF ST EDMUND

James's first major contribution to our understanding of the history of the Abbey of St Edmund was made in 1895, when the Cambridge Antiquarian Society published a two-part volume which had grown out of papers on the subject which James had read to the Society.[11] The first part of this book presented a reconstructed catalogue of the monastic library at Bury, which drew upon medieval booklists and his own identifications of former Bury manuscripts.[12] During the course of his studies, James had systematically catalogued all of the medieval manuscripts held by many of the Cambridge colleges, as well as other institutions, and it became apparent to him that from their bindings and shelf-marks, a large number of manuscripts could be identified as having belonged to the monastic library at Bury. Almost as a compulsion, he set about producing a comprehensive list of them and was able to identify that the library at Bury once contained some 2,500 volumes, a total 'enormous for a medieval library'.[13] The reconstruction of lost libraries was a feat which James was to repeat for other institutions, including Christ Church Priory and St Augustine's Abbey in Canterbury and the cathedral church at Norwich.[14] Thirty-one years later, James formally revisited the subject of Bury's monastic library when he published an updated list of manuscripts which he stated was 'as complete as I can make it' and which he believed to be a 'considerable improvement' on his 1895 list.[15]

The second part of James's book presented a detailed account of the construction and appearance of the abbey church and associated buildings, informed by numerous descriptive fragments contained within a wide range of documents and complemented by a lengthy appendix in which all of the sources cited were set out in full.[16] James's account drew in particular upon two main sources, which had not been studied previously, the first being a volume belonging to the College of Arms, in the margins of which had been noted descriptions of the many verses to be found within and adorning the abbey church. The content of this marginalia gave clear indications both of the topography of the building itself and the lavish decorative schemes employed within. James's second main source of information was a register of the abbey preserved in the public library of the French town of Douai. This register contained a list of the abbey's benefactors, from which it was possible for James to infer a great deal about the design and construction of the abbey church and buildings, and which also enabled him to identify the burial places of eighteen of the abbots. James illustrated his account with a plan of the abbey church, based on that published by Gordon Hills in 1865,[17] upon which he indicated the conjectural locations of different features of the church, its chapels, altars and notable tombs (Fig. 215).

The significance of James's book to our understanding of the abbey church, and the events which its publication precipitated, cannot be overstated and his work remains as relevant today as it was 125 years ago. The achievement of his conjectural plan is rendered all the more

significant when one remembers that in the late nineteenth century, much of the ruinous abbey church still lay buried beneath heaps of post-Dissolution rubble, so that even the ground-plan of the abbey church itself, which we take for granted today, was still an unanswered question. In his typically modest fashion, though, James considered the appendix to be the most important part of his book, although he was quick to point out that it was of 'unconscionable length' and that the collection of material he presented was by no means complete. On this subject, he observed wryly that 'no one would be better pleased than I, if a complete medieval guide-book to the Abbey were to be discovered. But I fear that none will.'[18]

From James's personal copy of his 1895 book, which is now in the collections of the Cambridge University Library, it is clear that he continued to take an active interest in the abbey throughout his life.[19] Scattered throughout the volume are many handwritten amendments where James has corrected his text, inserted details of newly identified manuscripts from the library and crossed through what he later came to think of as erroneous entries and statements. These amendments are complemented by many pieces of correspondence received by James pertaining to individual manuscripts and other details which he interleaved into the book at the appropriate points. He even inserted copies of excavation plans between the pages. As is discussed further below, it is extremely likely that James had this very copy of his book at his elbow when he wrote the text of the lecture transcribed here in 1932. First, though, we turn to consider two other episodes which occurred in the early years of the twentieth century, and which served to cement James's position as one of the foremost authorities on the former Abbey of St Edmund.

THE BONES OF ST EDMUND

In 1901, James became embroiled in a controversy surrounding a casket of bones held by the basilica of Saint-Sernin in Toulouse purported to be the relics of St Edmund. During the construction of Westminster Cathedral, which began in 1895, Cardinal Vaughan, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, attempted to procure the relics of St Edmund with the intention that they should be enshrined in the high altar of his new cathedral.[20] Following the intervention of Pope Leo XIII, the relics were taken from Toulouse and temporarily housed at Arundel Castle, but many notable figures remained unconvinced about the provenance of the relics and during August 1901 expressed their doubts in the letters column of *The Times*. Among the first correspondents was James, who, in the edition of *The Times* for 2 August 1901, stated that 'the evidence for the authenticity of the particular relics now in question seems to me personally so remarkably slender as to render caution more than usually needful' before setting out a clear argument against the authenticity of the relics.[21] James was initially rebuffed by the Revd J.B. Mackinley,[22] whose own book *Saint Edmund King and Martyr* had been published in 1893, but James's argument was widely reported and other voices soon joined the fray. Foremost amongst them was Sir Ernest Clarke, then Secretary of the Royal Agricultural Institute, but also an antiquary and native of Bury St Edmunds, who published a lengthy letter in *The Bury Post* for 31 August in which he set out clearly the case against the identification of the relics as those of Edmund.[23] He published a similar piece in *The Times* on 5 September,[24] which was reproduced in *The Tablet* on 14 September.[25] So compelling were the arguments put forward that Cardinal Vaughan was forced to concede that the planned translation should not go ahead and the relics remained in the custody of the duke of Norfolk at Arundel Castle.

There the subject rested for many decades, although in 1970 the Roman Catholic priest of Bury St Edmunds, Fr Bryan Houghton, again argued for the authenticity of the relics and unsuccessfully sought to bring them to Bury.[26] In the early 1990s, the bones were the subject

of a scientific research project, which concluded that they were derived from a minimum of twelve individuals (and probably many more) and that both sexes were represented in the assemblage. No archaeological date could be ascribed to the bones, although some had clearly been buried and exhumed, and although the committee drew no conclusions as to whether or not any of the bones might relate to Edmund, their report effectively marked the end of the debate about the authenticity of these relics which had been started by James some ninety years earlier.[27]

THE GRAVES OF THE ABBOTS

As was noted above, one of the key achievements of James's 1895 book was his identification of numerous tombs situated around the abbey complex, the locations of which he annotated on his published plan of the abbey church (Fig. 215). In 1902, buoyed up by the renewed interest in the abbey site brought about by the 1901 controversy and with work on his own translation of the *Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond* well advanced,[28] Sir Ernest Clarke instigated the Bury Excavation Committee, the stated aim of which was the excavation of the tombs of Abbot Sampson, two of his predecessors and three of his successors, which James had identified as lying buried in a line in the centre of the chapter house.[29] Although the 1902–03 excavations have become synonymous with James, he acted in an advisory capacity as a member of the Excavation Committee and only seems to have visited the site very occasionally during the course of the excavations, being kept updated of developments by post.

Excavation began in October 1902, and on New Year's Day 1903 the stone coffins of five abbots and the uncoffined remains of a sixth were identified lying in a row a few inches below the floor level, exactly where James predicted that they would be.[30] Following the announcement of the discovery, James again took to the letters page of *The Times* to explain the context of the discovery and set out the documentary sources which he had used to identify them.[31] The skeletons themselves were very well preserved, and James's documentary evidence allowed the individual abbots to be identified. Ranged from east to west, the easternmost burial was that of Abbot Ording (1148–57), then Abbot Samson (1182–1211), Abbot Richard de Insula (1229–33), Abbot Henry de Rushbrook (1234–48), Abbot Edmund de Walpole (1248–56) and, uncoffined, Abbot Hugh I (1157–80). A lead mortuary cross was recovered from the tomb of Abbot Samson along with a silver mount which is thought to have been part of his crozier.[32] The skeletons were lifted, studied and photographed before being reburied with due ceremony on 27 January 1903. Newly made stone lids inscribed with their names were placed over the coffins, where they can still be seen to this day set into the floor of the chapter house.

THE CONTEXT OF THE LECTURE

James's papers are split between several different archives, reflecting the major roles which he held during his lifetime. Among the larger collections, the Fitzwilliam Museum holds his antiquarian notebooks, including those pertaining to his work on the library of St Edmund's Abbey; King's College Cambridge holds manuscripts of many of his ghost stories; Eton College holds material relating to his time as Provost; and the Cambridge University Library holds a substantial collection of notes for lectures and sermons. The latter collection also includes James's personal copy of his 1895 book. These materials were all deposited by James's executors in 1954 and are catalogued under MS Add. 4229. An additional item held by the University Library, but not included with the original bequest, is the handwritten text of the lecture reproduced here, which was accessioned in 1954 as MS Add. 8389.

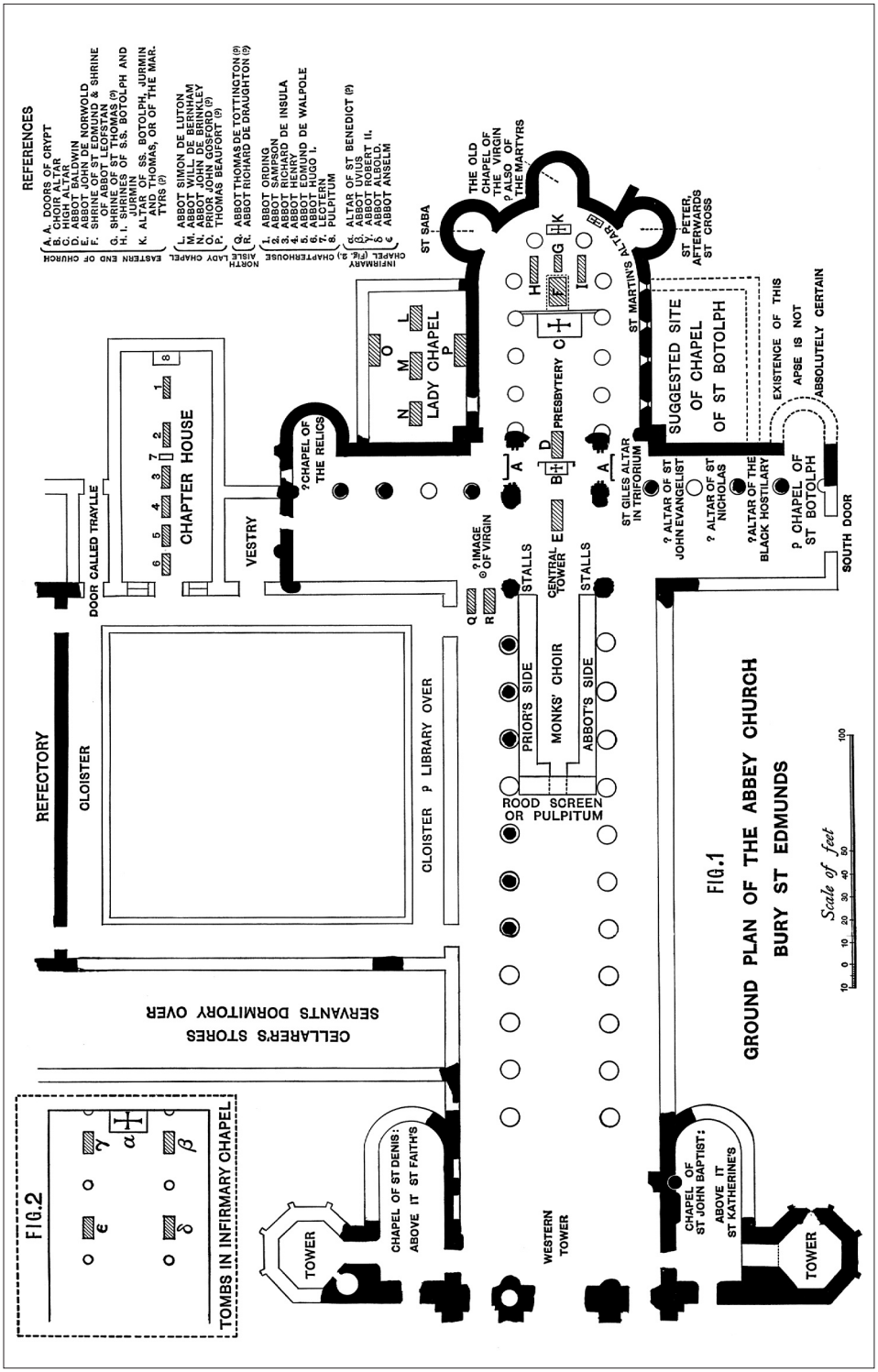

FIG. 215 – The plan of the abbey church published by James in 1895, showing the conjectural locations of internal fixtures and fittings, chapels, altars and tombs (*reproduced from James 1895, Fig. 1*).

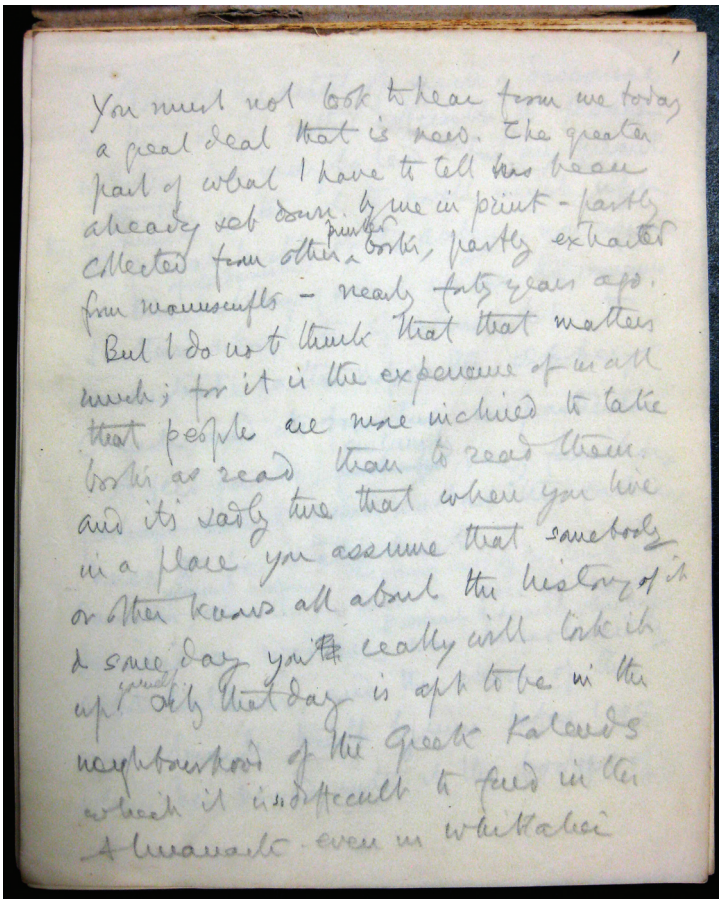

FIG. 216 – The first page of James's lecture (Cambridge University Library MS Add. 8389) (*reproduced with kind permission of Nicholas James*).

The manuscript of the lecture is written out longhand in pencil on an Imperial Bond pad (Fig. 216). The majority of the sheets are single-sided, and have been detached from the pad, with the pages of the lecture proper being numbered sequentially. Much of the text was written quickly and fluently in James's notoriously difficult handwriting, with very occasional crossings through, but in several places James has subsequently inserted additional words, clauses and even extra paragraphs into the text. Where paragraphs have been inserted, they either flow onto the verso of the sheet or are written on the verso of the opposing page, with their positions indicated in the text. In addition to the numbered pages, a pair of unnumbered pages of preamble are included at the beginning of the sequence. Their content is suggestive of them having been written at the venue prior to the commencement of the lecture and inserted at the last minute, although given James's extensive oratorial experience, it is possible that these comments, too, were prepared in advance.

Something of the writing of the lecture can be gleaned from personal letters which James wrote to his long-standing friend Gwendolen McBryde, which she published in the collection *Letters to a Friend* in 1956.[33] In a letter of 3 April 1932, written at the White Lion in Aldeburgh, James described how he had arrived in the town the day before and had brought

several pieces of work with him to complete: 'A lecture has to be written on the Abbey Church of Bury for the 21st and delivered there'.[34] James had a long-standing connection with Aldeburgh, for his mother's family were from the town and he holidayed there regularly throughout his life. He also used the town as the fictional 'Seaburgh' in one of his most famous ghost stories, *A Warning to the Curious* (1925), in which one of the three crowns of Anglo-Saxon East Anglia is excavated from a barrow, only for the protagonist to be hunted to his death by a malevolent guardian spirit.

In a subsequent letter to McBryde, dated 8 April, James reiterated that 'a lecture on the Abbey church of Bury has to be written when I can brace myself to it',[35] suggesting that little progress had been made by this date, and he wrote again from the White Lion on 19 April stating that he had 'read many a book and written hardly anything' during his stay in Aldeburgh. However, on 26 April he wrote from Eton reporting that 'I left [Aldeburgh] on the 20th for Bury where I stayed two nights, gave a vast stirring lecture on the 21st and saw a neighbouring church or two.'[36] In a follow-up letter of 2 May, James reported that 'after delivering a lecture at Bury on 21st I went to Cambridge for the weekend and came back [to Eton]'.[37] It would seem, then, that the text of the lecture was written relatively late during James's stay in Aldeburgh, perhaps between 19 April and its delivery on 21 April, with the revisions noted above having been made very soon after the original text was completed. James opens his lecture with a statement that 'the greater part of what I have to tell has been already set down by me in print … nearly forty years ago' and from this and other details contained within his text it is clear that his personal copy of his 1895 book was not far from his hand during the composition of the lecture. It is fitting that both the book and the lecture should have ended up in the same archive.

When James delivered his lecture he was sixty-nine and had been the Provost of Eton for twenty-four years. By this time, he had also become very well known for his four published collections of ghost stories: *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary* (1904), *More Ghost Stories of an Antiquary* (1911), *A Thin Ghost and Others* (1919) and *A Warning to the Curious and Other Ghost Stories* (1925), the first collected edition of which was published in 1931 and has subsequently never been out of print. In addressing the Bury Athenaeum, James was following in the footsteps of many notable writers, including Charles Dickens, who gave readings in 1859 and 1861, and Oscar Wilde, who spoke in 1884, and James's lecture was reportedly given in aid of the Athenaeum, which by the 1930s had fallen on hard times. The lecture was evidently well received, with a lengthy review published in the *Bury Free Press and Post* of Saturday, 23 April 1932 under the headline 'Bury Abbey Ruins "Asking to be Investigated"'.[38] The article described 'a highly interesting lecture' and stated that it was 'no surprise to find a large audience, representative of the borough and of West and East Suffolk, present at the Athenaeum Hall to hear the Provost's talk'.[39]

Although devoid of James's accomplished oration, the text of the lecture nevertheless conveys a vivid impression of the passion which James had for his subject, as well as providing a strong sense of his immense scholarship, which he wore very lightly. One important fact which needs to be borne in mind by the modern reader is that the ruins of the abbey church and monastic buildings we see today are very different to those visible to James in the late nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth. In James's day, very little of the footprint of the abbey church had been revealed in detail by archaeological excavations, with much of the building still covered by rubble and scrub, and several parts of the site lying within private gardens. It is particularly notable that at several points in the lecture James makes reference to the conjectural location and appearance of features of the site which have since been proven by archaeological fieldwork to be correct. For example, in 1932 the crypt had yet to be excavated, although James was correctly able to predict the existence of the two

flights of stairs accessing it from the north and south transepts. Similarly, James was able to predict the location of the chapel of St Botolph located in the angle between the choir and the south transept, and the location of the entrance to the Lady Chapel from the north transept, both of which were only confirmed by excavations conducted in the late 1960s.[40]

It is also interesting to see the intellectual regard in which James held his audience, for several times he refers to presumed knowledge on the part of the audience and frequently refers to comparative sites and biblical imagery with which he expects them to be familiar. This latter is the aspect of his lecture with which a modern audience would struggle the most. Perhaps most surprisingly, though, the lecture is also funny, in several places including examples of James's dry wit, a trait which is evident in so many of his written works.

'THE ABBEY CHURCH AT BURY'

A note on pagination: in the following transcription of James's lecture, his two pages of preamble have been prefixed in the text with the letters [a] and [b]. The beginning of each of the numbered pages of the lecture is highlighted in the text in square brackets, thus, [1]. Where additional paragraphs have been inserted, a reference has been included to the verso of the page on which it is found, e.g. [8v], with the continuation of the original page of text indicated thus, [9 cont.].

[a] Early and long associations with this town have taught me to regard the Bury Athenaeum as a very solemn and august institution, and I have no doubt that when I first heard of the similarly named place in London I believed that it was an inferior copy of this. Certainly, I little thought that I should ever have the honour of addressing an audience here under the kind and worshipful auspices of the Mayor of what is really my favourite town. It would be a pleasure to dwell upon my affection for it, but that is a merely personal matter and I have to consider the feelings of others.

I observe that some of those present are from the schools of the town. I am glad of this because I come from a school myself and I feel I ought to tell them something which [b] may be useful to them today.

Not long ago on a Sunday morning two Eton boys were coming out of our Chapel. One of them said to the other, 'That was a terribly good sermon', to which his friend replied 'Was it? I didn't time it'. Now, to those who measure the merit of lectures and discourses by this standard, I will give an opportunity of timing me over the course. The manuscript of my lecture contains a little over 45 pages, each of which average a minute in delivery. So now you know what you are in for.

[1] You must not look to hear from me today a great deal that is new. The greater part of what I have to tell has been already set down by me in print – partly collected from other printed books, partly from manuscripts – nearly forty years ago.[41] But I do not think that matters much; for it is the experience of us all that people are more inclined to take books as read than to read them and it's sadly true that when you live in a place you assume that somebody or other knows all about the history of it and some day you really will look it up yourself. Only that day is apt to be in the neighbourhood of the Greek Kalends, which it is difficult to find in the Almanack – even in Whitaker's.[42]

[2] Now, at the outset of such a discourse as this it is rather difficult to foresee whither one may be led, but my present inclination is not to dwell much upon the beginnings or the general history of the abbey, nor upon those of its monastic buildings of which we see the remains scattered about the Gardens, but to concentrate rather upon the abbey church, and its furniture in particular.

A few facts, certainly very familiar to some, about the fabric have to be stated first. The church built

by King Canute early in the eleventh century, which is once at least described as wooden and certainly a humble structure, was demolished by Abbot Baldwin, and the choir of the new church built by him before 1095, when he moved into it the bodies of [3] Saints Edmund, Botolph and Jurmin. After 1102, the sacrist Godefrid carried the work westward on an enlarged plan. After 1119, sacrist Ralph de Herveus built the nave. Samson and his sacrist Hugo, after 1180, finished up the rest of the work at the west end with its chapels and tower. In 1210, the central tower fell and was seemingly not rebuilt until the fourteenth century. After 1275, Simon de Luton built a large Lady Chapel on the north side of the choir. In 1430, the western tower fell and was slowly rebuilt.

Two great misfortunes befell the church besides the fall of the towers. One, the damage inflicted by the insurgents of 1327, the extent of which we do not clearly know, the other a fire in 1465, [4] which gutted the whole interior (though it spared the shrine) and probably made an end of the more ancient fittings. Thus we may think of the church having been at its richest in the years just before 1465 and to those years my description will apply.

You have all seen the conjectural reconstructions of the building.[43] The dates I have quoted show that in the main it was a twelfth-century, that is, Norman church. The total length of it – in the region of 500 feet – places it among the most considerable in England. We have a number of fine Norman naves, at Ely, Peterborough, Norwich, St Albans, Wymondham, Durham, and so on, with which Bury was comparable, but its near neighbour Ely furnishes perhaps the [5] nearest parallel. Bury resembled Ely in more than one respect. Both had chapels extending outside the aisles at the west end and lengthening the west front. Both had central and western towers; the fashion of having two towers flanking the west end was here discarded in favour of a tall single one in the middle and two lower ones at the sides. Both had important Lady Chapels added on the north side of the choir.[44]

But there were important differences. Ely is a square-ended church; Bury had an apsidal, a round, east end, with three apsidal chapels radiating from it. And at Bury, as you remember, the cloisters, chapterhouse and so on are obliged, owing to the presence of the old cemetery on the south, to be placed [6] on the north, whereas at Ely they were as usual on the south.[45] So, we must not press the parallel too far. Nave, big west tower and chapels, and Lady Chapel are the chief points.

At Ely, the central tower fell, as you know, in the fourteenth century and was replaced by the beautiful octagon or lantern. At Bury, in the year 1400, you would have seen a fourteenth-century, Decorated central tower with a tall spire of wood covered with lead, and at the west end a single Norman tower – how finished at the top we do not know.[46] In 1500, you would have seen some apology for a central tower and an unfinished western one in the Perpendicular style.

[7] If you stepped out of the church into the cloister, you would find it very much like the cloister of Norwich with traceried windows of Decorated style, and if you entered the chapterhouse from the east wall of the cloister you would find yourself in an oblong thirteenth-century Early English building, most likely with a stone seat running round the north and south walls, a rich blind arcading on those walls, a throne for the abbot at the east end, and a lectern near the middle. And if you made your way through a passage somewhere near the chapterhouse and went eastward, you would come to the infirmary, a church-like Norman building with aisles, ending in the east in a chapel with the tombs of [8] a number of early abbots.

That is all I need to say at present about the lie of the buildings, except that perhaps I ought to remind you that along the north side of the cloister lay the refectory, and adjoining the entrance of that were the stone troughs for washing your hands, called the lavatories. Over the east walk on the first floor would be the dormitory from which the monks could pass into the north transept of the church for the night services. And over the south, next to the church, I think was the library.[47]

Very well. Now let us approach the church and see what we find in it. It has three portals at the west end. In the central one (we know not about the side ones) are [9] magnificent bronze doors, unlike any others in England, made in the first half of the twelfth century by one Master Hugo. I imagine

them to be divided into panels, with bas reliefs of the life of Christ upon them. You may see early doors of this kind in many places in Italy – Verona, Pisa, Benevento, Monte Cassino – and also at least one pair at Hildesheim in Germany. [8v] The prevalence of this fashion in Italy has suggested that Hugo was an Italian. On reflection, I do not think that he was. Doubtless he was working under the direction of an Italian abbot, Anselm. But we have a Bible with pictures in it by him, and these are not Italian, but English.

[9 cont.] For the rest, the west front was flanked on north and south by polygonal towers, one of which may still be seen, and I do not know of another English example of this arrangement. Between these structures and the aisle walls of the church there are indications, on each side, of round-ended chapels. The records tell us that these were [10] two storied and were dedicated to St Denis, St Faith, St John Baptist and St Katharine. St Denis comes in because Abbot Baldwin had been a monk of St Denis in France and had built a 'basilica' to him at Bury, which had to be pulled down when the nave was built on its enlarged plan.[48] I place it on the north, and St Faith over it; St John Baptist on the south with St Katharine over it. Of course, the lower chapels were entered from the aisles of the church, and I guess that in that of St John Baptist was a font. You may think a monks' church would not want one, but the townspeople, at least in early times, will have had some claims on the nave [9v] and certainly on Easter Eve, the monks did celebrate the blessing of this font and go in procession to the chapel of St John Baptist. [10 cont.] It is, however, the received belief of at least since 1753 that [11] the fine fifteenth-century font cover at Worlingworth was brought thither from the abbey church: I have never heard the evidence for this.

Either in the chapel of the Baptist, or very near it at the west end of the south aisle was a window illustrating the life of John Baptist in about twenty scenes.

How do we know about this and other windows of which I speak? It is interesting. At the College of Arms in London is a collection of historical manuscripts known as the Arundel Collection – not to be confused with the Arundel manuscripts in the British Museum – one of them is a Bury manuscript containing a Chronicle by John Everisden, and other things, and on many margins, fly leaves, and other blank spaces an industrious person who must have been, I think, a Bury monk has noted down about the year 1300 some hundreds of verses inscribed on [12] windows, pictures, hangings, roofs, altarpieces, mostly at Bury, but also at Peterborough, St Mary's York and elsewhere. This list is the source of most of our knowledge about the furniture of the abbey church.[49]

The window in question, and indeed all those of which I know anything, must have been a single light – round headed, filled with medallions of thirteenth-century glass which were surrounded with verses written in capitals, Latin verses of the kind called Leonine, rhyming at the end or in the middle. Just such windows you may see at Canterbury in the north aisle of the church, and in the Trinity chapel and corona at the east end, and of course many of the great French churches are full of them – Chartres, Bourges, Sens, Auxerre. Great ingenuity was lavished upon making up the verse inscriptions, especially in England, but they are very hard to read, as I know well, [13] in the windows themselves, and consequently at Canterbury a fair copy was made of them on a roll and hung up for monastic visitors and clerics to read and copy. And since we find the same verses used in different places (I shall tell you of examples at Bury) we may conclude that they <u>were</u> copied by admirers and adopted.

I am not, of course, going to inflict these verses upon you, but I shall not scruple to dwell occasionally on the subjects of them, for example, the window of John Baptist. The story began with Zacharias and the angel, of course, then the birth and naming, John in the desert, his preaching, his calling Christ the Lamb of God, the Baptism (to which it seems four lines were devoted), then he was seen rebuking Herod, and sending disciples to Christ. Then came Herod's feast and its consequences after his death; there was a picture of Herodias and her daughter piercing the eyes and tongue of John's head with a [14] bodkin, a legend we do not often see. There was a story that when they did this, his head blew so violently upon Herodias that she was whirled off into the air and wanders about the world at night with a train of ghosts, the souls of unbaptised children. But there is quite a mythology

connected with St John's head and body, which I have no time to go into. The last picture in this window was of John being buried by his disciples.

We are now, remember, in the south aisle of the nave, which structurally had twelve bays. By structurally, I mean that there were twelve arches in the arcade before you got to the transepts, but not all of this was open to the public, for the choir of the monks projected into it and progress was barred on the east by a solid stone screen called the pulpitum. This was the regular [15] fashion in a monastic church. You may see it still at Westminster Abbey and Norwich, but in many cases the entrance to the choir has been shifted eastwards in later times, so that it comes east of the transepts and the screen has been done away with. The restorers of our cathedrals have been far too fond of getting an uninterrupted view from the west door to the altar. You may see this fashion at its worst at Peterborough, that in parentheses – 'naked and open from one end to the other'.

Let us look at the south aisle windows of the nave. They were filled with a long life of Christ, no doubt in medallions of thirteenth-century glass. Sixty-seven subjects are named; exactly how many windows they filled I am not prepared to say. The story began with the nativity and ends with Simon of Cyrene heaving [16] the cross; so it is not quite complete in our records. We will, however, glance at the subjects. Ten of them relate to the early history from the birth to the Presentation. Three to the three temptations; four to the miracle of Cana; four to the miracles of healing and the walking on the sea; four more to the women of Samaria; the raising of Lazarus occupies no less than eleven; then comes the Entry into Jerusalem and the Passion. It is odd that the Transfiguration and feeding of the multitude do not appear; to say nothing of other important incidents. But there is a great deal about the humility on the whole and this is a feature characteristic of the earlier medieval art. You would never find it in the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries. There is, however, a complete absence of the parables and indeed Canterbury is the only place I know of where these were represented on a large scale.

[17] A briefer look at the north aisle will suffice. Here there were no painted windows in the lower range, probably indeed very little in the way of windows at all, for the cloister abutted on this side. [16v] In fact, I found in 1506 a legacy for making two blind windows near St Christopher and this confuses any belief in the absence of ordinary windows. [17 cont.] The cloister had two doors leading into it. Near the eastern one as I guess was an image of the Virgin before which two Abbots were buried namely Thomas de Tottington (1301–12) and Richard de Draughton his successor. Of Thomas de Tottington there is this curious fact to be recorded: that part of his brass still exists. It was cut up and used, about 1540, to make a brass for one Margaret Bulstrode, whose effigy is of course engraved on the other side of it and it is now in the church of Hedgerley, Bucks, not far from Eton. Two lines of Thomas's epitaph remain on it, invoking the protection of the Virgin. These were a use of brasses in the market after the Dissolution no doubt.

[18] There was also in the north aisle an effigy of St Christopher. As you know, the usual place for his picture is on the north wall of the church facing the principal entrance – usually the south door. Doubtless it was put here in deference to the popular liking for seeing this image first thing on entering a church. Nowadays people put it in their cars. Was the nave roof vaulted in stone? I feel pretty sure that it was not. The account of the fire in 1465 speaks only of a wooden ceiling. Richly painted it was, after the manner of that of the choir, says our record. This work was done in the fourteenth century by the sacrist John Lavenham, who paid £100 for it, but of the design we know nothing.

As to the clerestory windows, I believe them to have been altered from the original Norman single lights with larger traceried ones in the fourteenth century. John of Gaunt gave seven windows on the south side of the church and Thomas [19] Rudham, we read, made divers windows in the nave in that century, and Lavenham did the same for the choir: 'windows of the new style in the vaulting round about St Edmund'. It is the almost universal story. [18v] Such windows, high up as they were, are pretty certain to have contained heraldry and single figures of saints, not pictures with small figures.

[19 cont.] Now we leave the open part of the nave. The great screen which fronts us had over it a large rood with Mary and John, the work of Hugo the sacrist under Samson. We pass under it and find ourselves in the space called latterly, perversely I think, the retrochoir, where old and infirm monks sat and others who were not to take an active part. Perversely, I say, because retrochoir has become a common and natural name for the part east of the high altar, or the ambulatory round the east end, while the proper retrochoir is at the west.

Thence into the choir proper, said to have had 80 stalls, the Abbot's immediately [20] on the right of the entrance, the Prior's on the left. I do not suppose that the stalls had canopies; I think they were backed by a solid screen of wood or stone, the inner side of which was adorned with hangings. Of the outer side, facing the aisles, there is something to be said. When Samson was sub-sacrist, that is, before 1180, says Jocelyn, our choir was erected by his means, he supervising the stories of the paintings on it and composing elegiac verses. In our Heralds' College manuscript is a series of about 90 lines, said to be inscribed 'in and round the choir'. I do not doubt that these are Samson verses, though they are not elegiac but Leonine. They tell the whole history of the Book of Genesis from the Creation of Adam (the work of the Six [21] Days apparently being omitted) to the Blessing of Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh by Jacob. This long series of twelfth-century paintings was a very notable work of art. There was something comparable at Peterborough, where abbot William de Waterville in the late part of the twelfth century had the outside of the stall-backs painted with a series of pictures of the life of Christ with types from the Old Testament. Some of these survived until the Civil Wars, but a record of the whole is preserved in the pictures and verses of a beautiful Psalter now at Brussels, dating from before 1300. Also, the same person who copied the Bury verses has noted down most of the Peterborough set for us, so there is no mistake about it. Another foreign parallel is in the cathedral of Toledo, where [22] the stone screen round the choir has the story of Genesis and Exodus in sculpture all round it, made in the fourteenth century. If you ask for other examples of the Genesis story in English buildings, I can refer you to three or four, all in sculpture, namely a few early reliefs on the west front of Lincoln, a large series on the front of Wells, a fairly complete one on the chapterhouse at Salisbury, and one of the fifteenth century on the roof bosses of Norwich cathedral.[50] But Samson's is by far the largest. He keeps very close to the Bible story, only introducing the legendary material in the shape of the blind Lamech unwittingly shooting Cain with an arrow.

I am afraid it is only too likely that his work perished in the fire of 1465. But there is a puzzle about it. We are told that Abbot John de Northwold (1279–1304) had the choir made and painted by John [23] Wodecroft the king's painter. I cannot believe that all Samson's work was done away with so soon, and I feel sure the verses are work of the twelfth and not the thirteenth century. We must be content with uncertainty as to what Northwold did.

The inside of the choir had elaborately pictured hangings. Whether they were painted cloths – the work of John Wodecraft – or embroidered, who can tell? I guess the former. These cannot have survived the fire. Those which are described for us were very elaborate compositions with many scenes. For instance, on the south, the Abbot's side, was one illustrating the parable of Dives and Lazarus in five scenes, and the miracle of Cana in four, with a picture of Hell-torments. Other hangings in various parts of the [24] choir, but of uncertain situation, had a life of Christ in sixteen scenes, a picture of Christ as Judge, and the birth and sacrifice of Isaac.

The stalls came to an end just before the central tower, and west of the transepts. Therefore the roof of this part of it was uniform with that of the nave, probably of wood, and certainly painted. I guess that the main roofs of the transepts were also of wood and that the stone vaulting did not begin till we reach Abbot Balwin's work in the presbytery and eastern chapels. But not a word is said anywhere, I think, of the transept roof or the central tower.

Fronting you as you stood under the central tower was the choir altar. It had some sort of altarpiece or retable, but could not have been so arranged as to obscure [25] the view of the high altar which stood some way east of it. Behind it, at the western termination of his own building, Abbot Baldwin was buried and in front of it Abbot John Northwold.

Perhaps we had better take stock of the transepts at this point. Of both it may be said that they had an eastern aisle with altars in the spaces between the columns, and probably both had chapels with an eastern apse at their ends. We are surer of that on the north than of that on the south. About the north transept I really know nothing except that it must have communicated by a stair with the dormitory, and that its apsidal chapel was very likely that of the Relics. Also perhaps the Lady Chapel and the vestry were entered from it.[51] [26] Of the south I can say that in its eastern aisle were altars of St John Evangelist and St Nicholas, and probably one called 'of the Black Hostelry', which I have taken to mean that it was for the use of Black – i.e. Benedictine – monks visiting the abbey.

Near St John's altar was a window illustrating his life and legendary miracles, and ending with his ordering his grave to be dug, lying down in it and being buried; the earth moving above him to show that he yet lives. St Nicholas, too, had a window of his life and the Black Hostelry one with some scenes from the Revelation, but our records of both seem to be incomplete. Somewhere here, too, was a chapel of St Botolph, built by Abbot Northwold later in the thirteenth century, consequently an addition to the main structure. [27] Was it in the angle between transept and south wall of the choir, complementary in position to the Lady Chapel on the north? Only excavation can tell.[52]

Leave the transept and go back to a position in front of the magnificent high altar in what is called the presbytery, east of the choir altar. Standing by it is the splendid Paschal Candlestick in bronze, wrought with images of the Creation and Fall of Adam and Eve. It had seven branches and perished in 1465.

Over the altar was a beam carved with thirteen scenes from the Passion, beginning with the Entry into Jerusalem and ending with the incredulity of St Thomas. Perhaps on this beam stood another rood with Mary and John made by the great artist Hugo – not the later sacrist who made the rood of the pulpitum. [28] Visible behind the centre of the altar was the western end of St Edmund's shrine, wrought with a gold relief of Christ in Majesty. The altar had also at one time a silver gilt retable. [27v] We read of tabulae – which may be frontals, pictures or I know not what – over and in front of the altar. One had types on it of the Passion and Resurrection, the widow of Zarephath holding up her two sticks, Jonah swallowed and vomited up, the father lion raising his cub by roaring over it. All very usual. Another tabula had the church with St Peter, and the synagogue with Moses. We also hear of a cross with Mary and John that stood on this altar and had been given by that rather dubious character Archbishop Stigand in or before William I's time. This must have one of the oldest of the many crosses in the church. Anon you shall hear of a somewhat older one.

[28 cont.] We have several other descriptions or rather inscriptions of works of art in and about this part of the church – a painted cloth with Christ in majesty and a curious one called a tabula near the candlestick, the central subject of this was a Last Judgement: Christ surrounded by throned apostles, the angel of the last trumpet, the dead rising, the blessed and the lost – the latter driven into Hell. Round this, is seems, were four scenes of the Works of Mercy, and also, what is odd, pictures of coin clippers, wicked lawyers and usurers first of all committing their several crimes and then punished for them in Hell. This has somewhat the air of a penitential offering. [29] And no doubt there was more splendour than is recorded. But we must pass behind the altar. There was a space here, we cannot tell how large.

Here we are confronted by the great glory of the church, the shrine of St Edmund. You must be aware of the general form of it: church shaped, of silver gilt and gold, on a marble base, perhaps with figures in panels on the sides of it, crested with gold, hung all about with jewels, crosses, and other precious offerings. Above it hung a painted wooden cover, raised and lowered by pulleys. At the fire of 1465, this cover fell down upon the shrine and effectually protected it, so that it survived until its defacing by Henry VIII's commissioners. Those who saw the shrine of St Taurinus of Évreux at the late French exhibition may form an idea of the general aspect of this much earlier and far more magnificent work [29v] of which we have many fairly faithful pictures in two copies of Lydgate's verse life of St Edmund – that in the British Museum and that which recently passed out of Lord Mostyn's library into the Yates Thompson collection.[53] They are by the same artist and, of course, agree as to the form of the shrine.

[30] Somewhere near the great shrine were a hanging on which the life of St Edmund was portrayed in eleven scenes and another sculpture or painting with six scenes. In both, the vengeance of St Edmund upon the Danish King Sweyn, the father of Canute, was dwelt upon at length. Sweyn, you may remember, was exacting heavy tribute from the lands of St Edmund, the monk Egelwin vainly protested and warned him, and finally Edmund appeared to him in sleep and seemed to smite him with a lance: he did not long survive the vision. This was the most famous and impressive of all the miracles of Edmund. It certainly influenced Canute to propitiate St Edmund.

Grouped, as I think, about the eastern end of the shrine were three more recorded ones of silver. Two contained the bodies of St Botolph and St Jurmin, the third, in the middle, [31] some relic of St Thomas of Canterbury, I suppose. I know little or nothing about it. But Botolph and Jurmin were very characteristic Suffolk saints. Botolph I have no doubt has been successfully shown to be the famous one to whom many English churches are dedicated and who once had a monastery at Iken near Aldeburgh.[54] Jurmin was the son of King Anna and brother or nephew of the Ely saint-princesses Etheldreda, Withburga, Ermenilda and so on. He fell in battle near Blythburgh, with his father, fighting against the old heathen Penda and long rested at Blythburgh, but was removed to Bury by Leofstan in the eleventh century. Leofstan also brought Botolph from Grundisburgh. Both belong to the seventh century. Botolph, Thomas and Jurmin also shared an altar here.

We now find ourselves at the end of the church. Three apsidal chapels face us. That on the left, or north, is unique in England [32] as being dedicated to the Oriental Saint Saba. Easily explained, for Abbot Anselm had been Abbot of St Saba's monastery at Rome. He had it painted, we know not with what pictures. That in the centre was, I have no doubt, originally the Lady Chapel: when the new Lady Chapel was built on the north of the choir it seems likely to me that the dedication of the old one was changed to that of the martyrs. Perhaps it was always a chapel of St Mary and the Martyrs, we cannot be sure, but it continued to be popularly called the Lady Chapel until late in the fifteenth century.

We have some verses said to be at or by the old chapel of the Virgin, though they do not relate to her but to St Martin. I daresay his altar, for he had one, was between the central and righthand chapels. There are plenty of verses in our manuscript relating to the Virgin and her miracles, but these are more [33] likely to have been in the new chapel.

The righthand chapel was that of the Holy Cross. Whether it had always been so or whether at one time St Peter's altar was in it, I have my doubts. At any rate we are sure of its name in the thirteenth century and two very Holy crosses are spoken of in connection with it. I imagine they were both kept there. One was a copy of the Cross of Lucca. Two abbots has been there: Leofstan, who was credited with the gift of the cross, and Baldwin who gave some relics to Lucca and, probably enough, also gave to the chapter the two manuscripts of Abbo's Passion of St Edmund which it still has. The Cross of Lucca is more usually known as the Holy Face Santo Volto. 'By the Holy Face of Lucca' was William Rufus' favourite oath. It was the crucifix, robed [34] and crowned which was said to have been carved by Nicodemus. You may not infrequently see copies of it of the twelfth century. One is at Amiens, for instance, and another at Beauvais and one or other of them, I think the latter, is now called an image of St Wilgefort. For the robed and crowned figure was in the later middle ages mistaken for a bearded woman and a ridiculous legend was woven of a Portuguese princess who rather than marry prayed that she might become repulsive; a beard accordingly grew on her face in a single night, and her irritated father crucified her.

That was one cross. The other was miraculous. It split itself almost without human aid out of the wood when being fashioned and painter Wohancus adorned it, Gaufrid the sacrist inlaid it with precious relics and Anselm of Canterbury consecrated it soon after 1100.

[35] Somewhere near this part was St Peter's altar and in his honour, no doubt, the vaulting was painted under Robert de Graveley, about 1211, with circular medallions. In the first, Simon Magus was seen departing with Peter and Paul before Nero, in the second he was borne up into the air by his familiar spirits, but fell at Peter's prayer. Next was the beheading of Paul, and last the crucifixion

of Peter. This fashion of painting medallions on the vaulting is well exemplified at Norwich on the vault of the Relic Chamber in the north choir aisle, where there are four beautiful groups, each of three saints; and also in the choir of Salisbury, where the medallions were whitewashed over by Wyatt but uncovered and carefully reproduced in the nineteenth century. We have there a long series of apostles and prophets, and of the signs of the zodiac, and occupations of the months. [36] What one was painted on the choir roof at Bury I do not know. But we must now leave the choir and enter the Lady Chapel from the north choir aisle.

Here there were several important tombs: of the builder Simon de Luton, of Abbots Bernham and Brinkley, Prior Gosford and Thomas Beaufort, and also much imagery. In particular, a series of medallions of types and antitypes which are merely described as 'at the altar of St Mary', which may mean anything. But the verses on them are interesting because they show how such things were borrowed. In several cases – and these remarkable ones – they are taken from a series painted round the Norman chapterhouse at Worcester. Those paintings are gone, but a full copy of the verses is in a twelfth-century manuscript at Worcester. The Bury artist, who must be then later, takes over the lines describing pictures of Christ unveiling the synagogue [37] and crowning the church, and also of Aaron's rod. The other Bury medallions had pictures of the Visitation, with the meeting of Righteousness and Peace, of the Nativity and its types, the Burning Bush, and Gideon's fleece, and the sign given to Ahaz by Isaiah.

In the windows were scenes of the early Gospel history, including the death of Herod. This rarely occurs. When it does, we see the sick king in bed cutting his throat with a knife (he had asked for one to peel an apple with) and devils carrying off his soul. Then there were some of the famous miracles of the Virgin: how she rescued Theophilus, who had sold his soul to the devil, by summoning Satan and making him give up the bond; how she healed a sick clerk with her own milk; and saved a Jewish boy. He had joined some Christian children going to Communion and had received the sacrament with them. His enraged father cast him into a heated oven, but he was found alive after many hours and said that a beautiful lady had thrown her robe [38] about him and kept him safe. The father of course was put into the same oven, but had no such happy exit.

This famous miracle was also painted on the wall of the chapel, and with it the tale of the monk who went out at night for evil purposes, fell into a river and was pounced upon by devils from whom the Virgin rescued him and sent him home. A tabula, perhaps the frontal of the altar, had Christ in majesty surrounded by the Evangelists and Four Beasts, and, allowing for the fact that here as elsewhere we only know about the pictures which happen to have verses on them, we may be sure that there was plenty more to admire in the Lady Chapel than I have mentioned. But, alas, all seems to have perished in 1465.

The most important part of the church that remains to be visited is the crypt, for I think we may neglect the vestry which lay between the chapterhouse and the transept. I think it could be entered both from the north and south sides of the choir. What William of Worcester tells us of it [39] is that it was 100 feet long by 80 broad, and that in it were 24 columns and a fair spring of water. It was dedicated to the Virgin, and no doubt had an altar and imagery of its own, of which nothing is told us. But it was the oldest part of the church, the substructure of Abbot Baldwin's great choir.

I do think it could be cleared out. I had years ago a letter from old Mr Beckford Bevan in which he told me that in 1869 an excavation was made in the centre of the choir and a thin bed of concrete found at a depth of 11 feet. Since that date nothing has been done: there have been hopes, but they have been frustrated, some at the last moment. It is difficult not to feel some impatience when one reflects that here is one of the most historic sites in England asking to be investigated. The work carried out on the chapterhouse and its neighbourhood has been so good and so interesting in its results that one cannot help asking for more.

What would be found, you may ask. Well, no one [40] can predict. I have always cherished the belief that the bones of St Edmund might have been decently buried there at the Dissolution; for it seems

to me that Henry VIII would not have smiled on the idea of a king's relics being scattered to the winds. But short of that, the light that would be thrown on the plan of the church and the remains of carving that would certainly turn up and the inscriptions that possibly might be found – all these could amply repay the undertaking, and what is now a very dull patch of grass would become a famous and interesting place. Really, this bit of work is as well worth doing as anything of the kind in our country.[55]

But enough of the crypt. We mount the stairs into the church again, and besides all the beauties I have mentioned we should find plenty to occupy us in another general exploration. We could go into the [41] triforium, in which were several altars and chapels – of St Giles, St Anne, St Nicasius. We should find many a tomb of interest: that of Alan Fergant Count of Brittany in the south transept; that of William Elmham who repulsed the King of Spain and relieved Bayonne; and somewhere the shrine of another Bury saint, the boy Robert, supposed to have been killed by the Jews in the twelfth century. He was pretty evidently a copy of St William of Norwich.[56] We do not know his story, which Jocelin de Brakelond wrote, but Lydgate composed a page to him in verse and a fifteenth century picture book shows us that an old woman hid his body in a well and that a cock robin played some part in the affair. I imagine his cult was never very important, for he does not even find a place in the Kalendae, whereas William of [42] Norwich is fairly frequent. In short, considered as an attraction he was a failure.

Then we might look at the upstairs chapels of St Katharine and St Faith at the west end. I do not know what we should find there. St Faith, a southern French saint, had a fair number of dedications in England – chapels at St Paul's and Westminster Abbey, a priory at Horsham in Norfolk, and more. We also find her on some of our East Anglian rood screens. And you may have seen at the French exhibition the wonderful old image of her from her great treasury at Conques, set with ancient gems and looking like a barbaric idol.

The bells too might be a lure to some. There were many of them, how many at the time of the Dissolution I do not know. There were nine in the central tower, which came crashing down in the great fire. There was a great bell called Gaufrid after the sacrist who gave it, the maker was one Hailficus; two others known as the two Lutons, a Newport, a Clopton, a Gabriel, and a *Haut et clair*. One at least survived till well after 1500 and was supposed to be the largest bell in England.

[43] A moment in the cloister and about it, and another moment in the infirmary, and I have done. Of the date of the cloister – fourteenth century – I have spoken. The windows of it were glazed, but of what was in them I only know that on the north side by the lavatory troughs were once upon a time one or more with pictures of the sun and moon – probably in chariots – and of the occupations of the twelve months of which seven lines are preserved, showing that May was riding hawk on hand, June mowing, August reaping, September gathering grapes, October sowing, November killing pigs, and December feasting. The refectory hard by was no doubt splendid and no doubt like other refectories had at its east end some important painting or sculpture – maybe a Last Supper, as at Dover, or a Majesty, as at Worcester.

The tangle of foundations which has been uncovered beyond and beside the chapterhouse is in our present state of knowledge [44] impossible to unravel. Some of them must have to do with the vestry. Whether any fragment survives of the old round chapel of St Edmund which was regarded as the most ancient piece of the building and was pulled down when the Lady Chapel was built is very doubtful, but just conceivable. [44a] A word more about that round chapel. John of Oxnead's chronicle tells us that when it was pulled down the walls of another old round church were disclosed. It was much broader than the chapel and so built that the altar of the chapel was at about the centre of it, and it was thought to be that which was first of all built for St Edmund. An interesting statement which has not, I think, been much commented upon. Is it wild to guess that there was once on this site a round church of two concentric circles – like that of Charlemagne of Aix – and that this was devastated by the Danes and only partly rebuilt, the inner side being retained as this old round chapel and the outer levelled to the foundations? The Aix church we know was copied in other places, as at Chamonix in France and even in England, at Hereford, though not very closely. But this is guesswork.

[44 cont.] There is, however, some chance that if digging were carried on to the east the site and plan of the infirmary might be ascertained and the resting places of the earliest Abbot Uvius and of the memorable Anselm who did so much for the church, discovered. There were seemingly three altars in the chapel – one of St Michael to whom it was dedicated, one to St Benedict, and a third nameless. The building had its own little cloister, as was usual; another work of the liberal John Gosford in the fourteenth century. All this survived the fire, fortunately.

Thus have I dragged you inevitably enough all over the church and with imaginary gazing at windows and pictures and altars [45] your necks may well be stiff, your brain weary and yourselves filled with self-pity. There is much else of course that I could have prosed upon; in particular the library, over the south walk of the cloister, and its contents, a large fraction of which still exists dispersed away among collections at Cambridge, Oxford, London and even Rome, where the Vatican houses the earliest Bury psalters. I have identified well over 200 books.[57] At many a point I could have reminded you of interesting events and personalities. But I decided early in the day to eschew general history and to be almost purely antiquarian. My wish has been to impress upon you the ancient beauty and splendour of the great church and the fact that in the unexplored ruins of it you have the happiest hunting ground for the historian and antiquary that is to be found in the length and breadth of England.

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NOTES

1 Scholfield 1935; Scholfield 1939; Pfaff 1980, 427–38; Rogers 2001.
2 James 1895a. For a recent review of scholarship concerning the abbey, which contextualises James's work, see Hoggett 2018.
3 C[ambridge] U[niversity] L[ibrary], MS Add. 8389.
4 Cox 2007 [1998].
5 James 1930, 71–3, quote at 71.
6 James 1904, 81–112.
7 The Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge holds a collection of 105 of James's notebooks, spanning *c.*1878 to 1931, which includes several volumes dedicated to Suffolk churches from his teenage years.
8 Pfaff 1980, 1–67; Pfaff 2004; Cox 1983, 1–80.
9 Pfaff 1980, 172–426; Pfaff 2004; Cox 1983, 81–233.

10 Cox 2007 [1998].
11 James 1895a.
12 James 1895a, 1–114; see also James 1926.
13 James 1895a, 99.
14 James 1903a; Beeching with James 1914.
15 James 1926.
16 James 1895a, 115–212.
17 Hills 1865a; Hills 1865b.
18 James 1895a, 150.
19 CUL, MS Add. 8399.
20 For a particularly detailed account of this affair and its wider context, see Young 2018, 132–9.
21 *The Times*, 2 August 1901, 4, col. E.
22 *The Times*, 9 August 1901, 6, col. E.
23 *The Bury Post*, 31 August 1901
24 *The Times*, 5 September 1901, 10, col. D.
25 *The Tablet*, 14 September 1901, 408.
26 Houghton 1970.
27 Gem 1998.
28 Clarke 1903. In his preface, Clarke makes it clear that James had read and commented on his text, including making a critical comparison of the Latin original and Clarke's translation.
29 James 1895a, 115, 148–9 and 180–1; Clarke 1903, xliii; Barker 1907, 53–8.
30 Clarke 1903, xliii; Barker 1907, 53–8.
31 James 1903b.
32 Barker 1924; The mount and the cross are both now in Moyse's Hall Museum.
33 McBryde 1956.
34 McBryde 1956, 180.
35 McBryde 1956, 181.
36 McBryde 1956, 182.
37 McBryde 1956, 183.
38 *Bury Free Press and* Post, 23 April 1932, 7, col. F.
39 *Bury Free Press and Post*, 23 April 1932, 7, col. F.
40 Gilyard-Beer 1969.
41 i.e. James 1895a.
42 The calends was a feature of the Roman calendar, but it was not included in the Greek calendar, hence the use of the phrase to express a date which never comes.
43 Here James is likely to be referring to the series of paintings made by the Revd William Kimber Hardy in the 1880s, versions of which are to be found displayed in the cathedral, the Abbey Gate and at Moyse's Hall.
44 Early in his career, James took a strong interest in the defaced figurines which are to be found decorating the Lady Chapel at Ely, first publishing a short article on the subject (James 1892) followed by an illustrated monograph in 1895, the same year that his book on the abbey was published (James 1895).
45 This is a rare instance in which James is likely to be wrong. Studies of monastic water management have shown that the claustral complex was almost always placed further down the watershed than the abbey church, so that fresh water would flow to the church first and then work its way through the precinct, becoming increasingly dirty on the way as it passed through kitchens, latrines, fishponds and drains, see Bond 2001.
46 The former appearance of the upper reaches of the abbey church remains a mystery to this day and is not a subject on which new evidence is likely to come to light. As James suggests, our best hope lies in comparisons with contemporary structures at Ely, Lincoln, Peterborough and Norwich.
47 As has been discussed, James had a particular fascination with the former monastic library and its contents, see James 1895a, 1–114 and James 1926. The holdings of the monastic library have subsequently been studied by Thomson (Thomson 1980) and Sharpe (Sharpe 1998) and it is possible to identify at least 1,989 titles held at the abbey by the end of the fourteenth century, with perhaps more than 2,200 being held by the end of the fifteenth century. By any reckoning, Bury's library was one of the largest and most prized monastic libraries in the country and it is therefore not so surprising that Abbot William Curteys (d.1446) built a library room, ordered the return of all of the abbey's books held by individual monks and laid down new rules for how the library was to be managed.
48 In 1958, a series of trial trenches were excavated within and around the footprint of the proposed new

chancel of St Edmundsbury Cathedral, as it was understood that archaeological traces of the former church of St Denis might lie on the site. The work was conducted by A.R. Dufty and C.A. Ralegh Radford on behalf of the Society of Antiquaries, and the western wall of the basilica of St Denis was located south of the proposed extension and about 30 feet in front of the porticus of St Faith, see Dufty and Radford 1959; Hoggett 2018, 132–3.

49 This evidence is discussed at length in James's 1895 book and transcriptions of many of the relevant passages are provided in his appendix, see James 1895a.

50 James was an authority on the roof bosses of Norwich cathedral and was able to draw upon his detailed knowledge of biblical imagery to identify and interpret the characters and scenes depicted on them. He published two illustrated monographs on the subject in 1908 and 1911, and when a celebratory publication marking the 1,300th anniversary of the foundation of the diocese was published in 1930 he contributed a chapter on the roof bosses, too, see James 1908, 1911 and 1930.

51 The remains of the Lady Chapel were cleared during the course of the excavations undertaken by the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works between 1959 and 1964. It was revealed to be three bays long and two bays wide, and a burial was discovered near the centre of its north side which was identified as being of Prior Thomas Gosford, see Gilyard-Beer 1969, 258–9.

52 Again, later excavation did indeed prove James to be correct. Excavations undertaken by the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works between 1959 and 1964 revealed that the chapel of St Botolph was three bays long and one bay wide, but only its vaulted undercroft survived, tucked into the angle between the southern wall of the crypt and the eastern extent of the northern apsidal chapel of the south transept, see Gilyard-Beer 1969.

53 See front cover, taken from from the metrical life of St Edmund by John Lydgate, British Library, Harleian MS 2278, folio 9 recto.

54 James's comment here reflects a series of publications contesting the identity of Botolph's Iken which were published during the 1920s and 1930s, although the consensus now is that it is indeed Suffolk's Iken to which historical sources refer, see Hoggett 2010, 47–50.

55 The excavation of the crypt was finally undertaken by the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works between 1959 and 1964 and it confirmed that that the whole space had been infilled with masses of rubble, some pieces being of quite considerable size. Work was limited to the clearance of the rubble layers down to the level of the medieval floor and revealed the two entrances to the crypt hypothesised by James, with stairs descending from between the first and second columns of the eastern arcades of the north and south transepts. The excavation also revealed the footings of nine of the fourteen main piers of the crypt arcades, but no trace was found of the ten lesser piers which would have divided up the crypt into five aisles, see Gilyard-Beer 1969. The bones of St Edmund were not located, and their whereabouts remain the subject of much conjecture, e.g. Whitelock 1970; Scarfe 1970; Gransden 1994; Young 2018.

56 In 1896, James collaborated with the Norfolk clergyman and antiquary Augustus Jessopp to produce the first published edition of the *Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich by Thomas of Monmouth*, see Jessopp and James 1896.

57 James 1895a, 1–114; see also James 1926.

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